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News Release

UMC and UND Collaborate to Study Space Telescopes Located Miles Apart Communicate with Each Other about Deep Space

By David DeMuth, Elizabeth Tollefson on Wednesday, August 16, 2006

CROOKSTON, MN (August 16, 2006) – A telescope located at the Red River Valley Natural History area near the University of Minnesota Crookston (UMC) will begin operating this fall in tandem with one near the University of North Dakota (UND), the Transient Object Automated Telescope (TOAST). The Crookston – UND Search Telescope (dubbed CRUST) will give a two-telescope, robotic and synchronized view of extrasolar planet observations, gamma-ray burst afterglows, minor planets, comets, asteroid light curves, and supernovae.

The CRUST project is being developed by David DeMuth, Ph.D., UMC physics professor and head of Math, Science and Technology Department, and UND astrophysicist Tim Young, Ph.D. The 85-acre Natural History Area is directed by Dan Svedarsky as part of his split appointment with the Northwest Research and Outreach Center, a cooperator in the project.

"The telescope will serve principally as a research tool, but there will be opportunities for involvement from students in our physics classes, and for local communities through public night sky observations," DeMuth said. "We are excited to offer our students a chance to participate in astrophysics research as well as availing both students and community members to the magic of a nighttime prairie sky in a way we have never been able to before."

The telescope is to be assembled by the end of October and ready for public observation in the next year. The Crookston telescope was funded through a Grant-in-aid of Research, Artistry, and Scholarship from the University of Minnesota with significant matching funds from Young and UND, where DeMuth also holds an adjunct position.

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